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## PUBLIC OCCURRENCES.

## IRISH.

## ULSTER.

## DISTILLATION FROM GRAIN.

On Thursday the 9th instant, a numerous and respectable Meeting of the Inhabitants of Belfast was held in the Exchange-rooms, pursuant to public notice; for the purpose of taking into consideration the intended Bill for permitting distillation from grain in Ireland.

Edward May, Esq. Sovereign, being called to the chair, opened the business of the Meeting by stating, that when the legislature adopted the measure of prohibiting distillation from grain, they were induced thereto principally with a view to afford relief to the West India proprietors, who for want of a market for the productions of these islands, had been reduced almost to a state of ruin. The Government therefore adopted that measure, in order that the distillation from sugar in place of grain, might, by the consumption of that article, afford them the relief which justice and necessity required. Owing to an error which had occurred in the bill, the distillation from sugar had not taken place in this country. In England, Government had found the measure very effectual, and therefore it was to be continued there; but in Ireland, it was found that the moment the regular distilleries were stopped, the private distilleries commenced, and the supply of whiskey, and the consequent consumption of grain was as great as ever, whilst at the same time the revenue was deprived of the very great sums of money which the licensed distillers used to pay. But another consideration ought also to be attended to, and that was the regard that is due to the agricultural interests of the country, for it must be admitted, that the moment you stop distillation from grain, that moment you lay a check upon the enterprize of the farmer, and the improvements of agriculture.—In this view of the case it may be questioned, how far it would be proper for this meeting to take upon themselves to decide upon the utility or inutility of the measure, and whether it would not be better to delay farther procedures until a meeting of the county should be called, for undoubtedly the territorial, the landed interest is as deeply involved in the result as the mercantile. It might, perhaps, be represented, that the resolutions which this meeting may come to, were dictated by interested motives, or why give

such encouragement to the West India produce, and neglect the farming interest at home. As to the price of grain advancing in consequence of the proposed measure, he did not believe it would occasion much rise in the markets, for it was well known that there was an abundance of grain at this moment in the country. The hag-yards were never more plentifully stored than at present. An argument had sometimes been used, that distillation from grain ought not to be permitted on account of this country being deprived of all supply by importation from abroad; but it deserved attention, that by the ablest calculators in England it had been stated as a fact, that the greatest quantity of grain imported in any one year was not equal to the consumption of these countries for one week, nay, even for one day. The measures which Government had adopted to prevent private distillation, had hitherto proved ineffectual. At first it was thought that laying a fine of 50*l.* upon the townland for every illegal still found in it, would check it, but it had not done so. He believed, however, it was in agitation to increase that to 500*l.* He again stated his opinion that it would be better to delay adopting any measure at present, and as three gentlemen had been sent from a meeting in Dublin to London, we ought to wait until we learn the result of their procedure. He further stated that he considered it to be his duty thus candidly and fairly to state his opinion upon the subject, and he assured the meeting that in doing so, he was not influenced by any party motives, he had no reason to be attached to the ministry in this measure, and God knows he was as little attached to the opposition. What he aimed at was to chuse that which should appear most for the interest of the country.

Mr. Getty, Mr. R. Davis, Mr. W. Tennent, and several other respectable inhabitants severally delivered their opinions in favour of an application to Government against the distillation from grain.—On this occasion, it was stated, that though the Legislature, when they resolved upon prohibiting distillation from grain, had in view, to afford relief to the West India Merchants, as stated by Mr. May, they had also another more important object in view, which had great weight in deciding the question at the time the Bill was passed, and that was to prevent the rise in the price of grain, being aware that

no supplies would be obtained from abroad, owing to the state of Europe. That at this present moment it became a question of the very first importance to consider, what influence the proposed measure of permitting distillation from grain would have upon the markets. The very rumour of it had already advanced the price fully 20 per cent. and it was a fact, that at present the prices were considerably higher than they were at the time when Government found it necessary to stop distillation; and higher than they were at the time of the year 1800, when it was deemed expedient by Government, to resort to the payment of high bounties, and in fact, to all the means in their power, for bringing from America, and other places, every species of grain that could afford relief in the scarcity which prevailed. It ought to be taken into consideration, that very great numbers of mechanics and different descriptions of working people, were at this time without employment. That there was great reason to apprehend that the Chancellor of the Exchequer had been misinformed with regard to the quantity of grain consumed by the private distillers, for there were no authentic documents of ascertaining it, but at any rate it could not possibly be nearly equal to what was consumed by the licensed distillers. That in fact the question would assume this shape, whether the price of grain was just now as high as it ought to be, or whether it should be higher; for that must follow as a necessary consequence if distillation was to be permitted. The farmer, at the present moment, certainly had ample remuneration for his labour, and were the prices to be advanced, the poor would be reduced to great misery.

With regard to private distillation, it was certainly necessary that some more effectual measures ought to be taken to suppress it, for it was a well known fact, that at Magilligan Point a public market was held on Wednesday and Saturday in every week, for the purchase of grain and the sale of whiskey, and this was also well known to a number of official people.

The present could certainly never be considered a question of party, for all parties must look upon it as connected with the first interests of the country. The stoppage of the distilleries had already produced one beneficial effect, by preventing the lower ranks from indulging in the drinking of whiskey, so prejudicial to their morals, and making them resort to the use of beer, so beneficial to their health.—I cannot, said one gentleman, declare, as

several others have done, that I am wholly disinterested in the result of this measure, as I am certainly connected with the West India trade; yet I trust, that any interest I have in this respect, shall never make me swerve from what is right, in a matter so essential to the good of the country; and I hope that this question shall never be placed in that point of view, but that we shall calmly deliberate, and respectfully and temperately submit our opinion to the Legislature, with what information we can afford them, and after having done so, leave it with them to decide. As to waiting the result of the measures which the gentlemen who have gone from Dublin may pursue, it does not appear to be necessary, for undoubtedly there are many gentlemen here as capable of judging of the measure as those in any other part of the kingdom, the capital not excepted.

The Meeting then resolved unanimously that a petition should be presented to the Imperial Parliament, praying, that the prohibition of the distillation from grain may be continued in Ireland.

The following Gentlemen were appointed a Committee to prepare the Petition, which is to be submitted to another General Meeting, to be held on Saturday at one o'clock, viz.—The Sovereign, Robert Getty, Esq. William Tennent, Esq. Robert Davis, Esq. Jos. Stevenson, Esq.

On Saturday a meeting was held in the Exchange Rooms, to receive the Report of the Committee. Edward May, Esq. Sovereign, having taken the chair, read the petition, which was unanimously approved of, and on the motion of Mr. Getty, it was resolved that the Sovereign should transmit the same to the Chancellor of the Exchequer, that it might be laid before Parliament without delay.

Mr. May, jun. then rose and said, he was sorry to observe, that in the discussion of this subject at the last meeting, it seemed to be taken for granted, that the only object in view was to keep down the prices of grain, and to preserve that article of necessity for the supply of the poor. He, for one, entertained a very different opinion, and he would candidly declare it. He considered it to be a measure suggested by those who were interested in the sale of West India produce, rum and sugar.—He was strengthened in this opinion by what he had learned since he came into the room, that besides the petition which was about to be sent from this meeting, another was to be sent from the West India merchants. In that point of view it appeared to be a question not so much involving the interest of the poor, as the in-

terest of the rich. To what else could he attribute the precipitancy with which this measure had been gone into? Not a moment had been allowed to investigate facts, or inquire into the state of the hag-yards in the country. It had been stated that the crop of last year was deficient, but he certainly did not think so. Potatoes never were in greater abundance, and oats were also plentiful. He would not say it was a superabundant crop, but he would maintain it was a good crop. If the sole object in the contemplation of gentlemen was to provide for the necessities of the poor, why was it that they had overlooked that consideration upon a former occasion. This remark he would apply to some observations which he had formerly heard, that a number of artisans and labourers were without employment, owing to the scarcity of timber, flax, and other articles, usually imported from abroad. If regard to the interests of the poor was the sole object now in view, why was their interest so much neglected, why was no meeting called, when the Orders in Council were issued, to petition against them as tending to throw the working classes idle? Had he the smallest apprehension that the proposed measure would tend to distress the poor, he would be the last man to countenance it, but as he had no such apprehension he would therefore support it.

Mr. Davis stated, that in order to prove to the satisfaction of the meeting, what was the state of the grain in this country and what ideas were entertained by merchants of the probable rise of markets, he could inform them that he knew a respectable gentleman in the county of Tyrone, who dealt in grain, and such was his opinion of the probable rise of markets, that he had, previous to hearing any thing of the proposed measure by Parliament, gone towards the south of Ireland, in order to lay out every shilling he could spare, in the purchase of grain, for the consumption of the north, under the conviction that prices would rise.

Mr. Getty stated, that there could be no doubt of grain being higher in price now, than it was at the same period last year: and he knew for certain, that in Belfast market, potatoes had that very day been sold at 3s. 6d. per cwt.

Mr. Greenlaw said, he was very much surprised at the observations which had been made by Mr. May, that the present measure was not dictated by the necessities of the poor, but entirely from a regard to the interest of the rich. If Mr. May would chuse to have a demonstration of the fact, let him immediately divide the house, and then he would be able to determine whether it was West India

merchants alone that would vote for the measure. He could assure him, that he had a very extensive correspondence in various parts of the country; from all of which, his information led him to believe, that the last crop was generally defective. In the spring it was injured by the wet. In the summer, months the appearance was more flattering; but in the harvest the wet again destroyed our hopes, and it was well known, that wheat in particular, was a very short crop. Potatoes were better in point of quantity, but were very bad in quality. Mr. May had stated that the hag-yards in the country were full; in many places they appeared to be so, but let him go and examine, and he will find they are principally filled with straw. He regretted much that any gentleman should argue as Mr. May appeared to do, from his regard to and connexion with the landed interest. He would do well to consider the situation in which this country stood at the present moment, precluded from all intercourse with America and the Baltic; nay the ports of the whole world shut against us. Whatever grain remains in Ireland should be husbanded by government. It might come to be the only resource the country could look to, for even a scanty subsistence. We could not ensure the ensuing harvest being a good one, but dreadful would be the consequences if it should fail. The consumption of grain by private distilleries was shameful; it was a reproach to the country, that a parcel of smugglers were able to defeat the object and the laws of the Imperial Parliament.

The Sovereign observed, that the other day when this subject was under discussion, he then took the liberty of stating his opinion very fully. He was still of the same opinion, that the measure which the Legislature had in view was best for the country. He did not believe that the prices in the markets could be greatly influenced by it; but even though they should be in some degree affected, and though the poor should experience a temporary inconvenience, it was certainly as fair that the farmer should at times partake of the advantages of an incidental rise in the markets as any other description of men. The best writers upon political economy were of opinion, that all interference upon subjects of this nature, were prejudicial and hazardous. He could not refer to higher authority than that of Dr. Adam Smith, an authority to which all of us must bow, and that able writer pointed out in the most satisfactory manner, that it was better to leave such subjects to their own tendency, as they would find their

own level. The right of petition ought always to be used with caution, and he recommended that to their consideration upon the present subject.

Dr. Forsythe said, that whatever idea some people might entertain respecting the interest which West India merchants had in question, surely no such idea could attach to him, and he declared it to be his candid opinion, that if the distilleries were permitted to work, the consequences would be very injurious to the country. He was fully convinced that the effect would be a material rise in the markets, which certainly were sufficiently high already. It undoubtedly was a very hazardous experiment under the present circumstances of Europe, which preclude us from all hope of relief if the ensuing harvest should fail. It had been stated that the laws were evaded, the object of Government defeated and the revenue defrauded. But why should this be? Why did not Magistrates do their duty? If Magistrates neglect the duty they owed to the public, why not change them; and if the revenue officers were not sufficiently vigilant, why were not others put in their places? Even if the laws were found defective, why not make new laws. All these measures he was of opinion ought to be tried by Government, rather than resort to what is now proposed, which might ultimately prove extremely hazardous to the most important interests of the country.

Some other Gentlemen said a few words, after which it was moved, that the thanks of the meeting be returned to the Sovereign for his readiness in calling this meeting, and for his conduct in the Chair. This passed unanimously.

The Sovereign said, he was extremely obliged by this mark of their approbation. They had heard him state that he did not approve of the object which they had in view, but though that was his own opinion he certainly felt it his duty to yield, when he found the general sentiment and the majority of the meeting so decidedly against him.

**ANTRIM...Married...** Mr. J. Brangers, of Antrim, to Miss Mary Ramage, of Ballymouny. Mr. John Bankhead, to Miss Lurting, of N. Limavaddy. Mr. Austen McCannell, to Miss Armstrong. Mr. John Gibby, of Belfast, to Miss Dunlop, of Carrickfergus. Mr. Robt. Wason to Miss Eliza Gillespie, both of the Falls. Mr. John Lytle to Mrs. Sloan, both of Portlone. Mr. J. Millar, of Carrickfergus, to Miss Jane Beggs, of Doneymoy. In the island of Rathlin, a few days ago, Capt. Alexander Wier, to Miss M. Black, both of said island. On this happy occasion, every

soul in the Isle was assembled at the ceremony, and afterwards partook heartily of the accustomed beverage.

**Died...** At Larne, Mr. George Leno. At Randalstown, Miss Martha Adams. In Belfast, Mr. Robt. Gihon. Miss Patton, daughter of the late Rev. Isaac Patton, pastor of the Seceding Congregation at Lyle, near Templepatrick. Mrs. Pirry, of High-street, Belfast. In Ann-street, Belfast, Mrs. Millar. At Grace-Hill, Mr. Samuel McMullen. In Belfast, aged 15, Mr. James Ross. Mr. Edward Hogg, one of the people called Quakers, aged 83.

**ARMAGH....Married....** Edward Mockler, esq. to Miss Elizabeth Bolton. Mr. C. Luton, of Moira, to Miss Eleanor Carlton. Mr. Thomas Emerson, of Lurgan, to Miss Ann Halliday, of Stoney Hill. Mr. P. Bennet, to Miss Catharine McKee, both of the vicinity of Armagh.

**Died...** Mrs. Mary McKinsty, widow of the late John McKinsty, esq. Mrs. Perry, relict of the late George Perry, of Perymount, esq. At the village of Four-mile-hurn, parish of Donegore, about which she resided since a child, Nancy Alexander, alias Allen, aged 112 years. This old woman reaped for 63 successive years of her life, in the boon of a respectable farmer in the neighbourhood (that of Mr. John Ferguson and his successor, the late Mr. Thomas Ferguson.) It is a singular circumstance, that notwithstanding her great age, she enjoyed the use of all her faculties, till her last moments, and of all her senses except that of sight, which had been gradually decaying for some years past. She was never known to have a head-ache.

**Down...Married...** Mr. J. Taylor, of Grayabney, to Miss Jane McClure of Ganaway. Mr. S. Wallace of Booten, to Miss Porter, of Ballyrussel. Wm. Burke, esq. of Ballydugan, to Miss Blake. Mr. John Savage of Banbridge, to Miss Mary Anne Trumbull, of Dublin.

**Died, Mrs. M'Caubrey,** of Comberbridge, near Ballynahinch. At Ballywalter, Mr. John Napier. At an advanced age, Mr. John O'Neill, of Banvale, county Down. He was lineally descended from the ancient Kings of Ulster. In the early part of life, he spent several years on the Continent, and on his return to his native country, devoted his attention to agriculture and the linen trade; he possessed a well cultured understanding, and was distinguished by a remarkable dignity, blended with the most amiable courtesy of manners; through life, his conduct was guided by the principles of integrity and honour, and had conciliated universal esteem and respect. By his death, the poor have lost a father, and his connections an invaluable friend.

## BRITISH.

DIED on the 11th instant, at Greenbank, near Liverpool, William Rathbone, in the 51st year of his age. As a merchant of considerable eminence, he possessed the strictest integrity and most delicate honour, and in the midst of a very extended business, he, by a judicious economy of time, gave much attention to literary pursuits, and stored his capacious mind with much valuable knowledge. At the same time he *did not* neglect the duties of a man and a patriot; but soaring above the narrow views of selfish interests, exerted himself by his advice, and the exercise of his extensive abilities, to promote the welfare of his country, his neighbours and his friends. He proved, by his example, the possibility of blending in a happy medium, in one character, the merchant, the man of refined knowledge, and the true philanthropist. His was not that cold selfishness which wraps the mind in an entire attention to private emolument, and produces indifference to the concerns of others.

He had a warm heart, joined with a correct judgment, and a well disciplined mind; indeed it was the great business of his life to form a just estimate of things, giving to each its due place, and to preserve the equilibrium of a well poised mind. Such was his delicacy that he often found it a difficult task to determine on the line proper to pursue, and was not easily satisfied with himself: but having once decided, he followed his matured conclusions with undeviating firmness.

In private life, he was possessed of most amiable manners; sincere, affectionate, and ardent in his friendships, his friends will long have to deplore the loss of the faithful monitor, and the instructive, cordially attached companion and correspondent. He was a man of domestic habits, and was happy in the endearments of a most amiable family; being a most tender and affectionate husband, and a truly good father; he bore a lingering illness with the utmost composure and resignation, and looked forward undimmed to the termination of his prospects in this life with steady confidence in the mercy and goodness of God.

In the whole tenor of his life, he has left an example worthy of imitation, and affords a strong inducement to follow the same paths; that in our lives we may be as truly useful, and in our deaths as much supported by peace and hope.

BELFAST MAG. NO. VII.

When in great bodily pain, but consoled by the affectionate attentions of his family, he would often say, "*mine is not all suffering.*"

Such characters reconcile us to human nature, and show to what a height of virtue man may attain, by correcting his passions and cherishing the finer feelings and sensibilities of his nature.

As a proof of the warmth of his philanthropy and the ardour of his mind, a circumstance may be mentioned, which, as connected with this country, may hence receive a local interest, and also furnish a distinguishing trait in his general character.

During his last illness, and in a state of great bodily weakness, on hearing an account of the hardships likely to await this country from the want of flaxseed, he became so interested on the subject, that nothing but extreme weakness prevented his immediately writing a number of letters on the business, to move to a consideration of the impending danger. Thus his active mind was influenced by a wish to be useful, notwithstanding the failure of his bodily powers; and his ruling passion to do good, "*was strong even in death.*"

He interested himself much in the civil and religious state of Ireland, and was a warm friend to her best interests.

His religion was of that practical kind, which consists in doing good, and his conduct was a beautiful exemplification of the maxim of the moralist, that "*no life can be acceptable to God, which is not useful to man.*"

The following stanza from Beattie's Minstrel, being the advice for his conduct through life, given to Edwin by his father, is known to have been much his favourite, and was fully illustrated by his own example:

"And from the prayer of want, and  
plaint of woe,

Oh! never, never turn away thine ear,  
Forlorn in this bleak wilderness below,  
Ah! what were man, should Heaven  
refuse to hear!

To others do (the law is not severe)

What to thyself thou wishest to be done,  
Forgive thy foes, and love thy parents  
dear,

And friends, and native land; nor  
those alone;

All human weal and woe learn thou to  
make thine own."

In a future number we hope to be able to give a more detailed account of the life of this excellent man.

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The following remarkable circumstance may be depended on as a fact. A poor Irishwoman, who resided in Shoe-lane, London, was brought to bed on Friday se'nnight, and on the same evening dreamt that she should die on the Monday night following. This portentous dream was little attended to by her husband or her neighbours; but on Monday, during the hurricane, the husband thought he heard the roof of the house giving way, and mentioned his fears to his wife. She, however, was unable to help herself, and

dreadful to relate, the roof shortly afterwards falling in, buried in the ruins the unfortunate woman and her child! The husband with the utmost difficulty preserved his life, and though buried in the rubbish, miraculously extricated himself from his perilous situation.

NORWICH... On the night of the 17th ult. a lamb the property of Mr. J. Reynolds, of Beeston, St. Andrew, was completely buried under the snow, and was not seen again till the 12th instant (an interval of 26 days) when it was alive and well!

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### AGRICULTURAL REPORT.

*From the 20th of January, to the 20th of February, 1809.*

THE weather having for some weeks past been extremely wet and stormy, has greatly retarded the progress of the plough, and will probably occasion a press of business to the farmer, in getting the land prepared for the spring crops.

The early sown wheat continues to look well, and the later crops begin to put on a more favourable appearance.

The prices of grain continue to advance, oats in particular has experienced a very great rise, and oat-meal is proportionably high. This extraordinary rise appears to be occasioned by a general apprehension of the effects likely to result from the liberty proposed to be granted to the public stills, and not from any conviction of a scarcity of grain: last year's crop although not as productive as might be expected from its appearance, yet will fall very little if any thing short of the average of the last five years, and the general representation of the potatoe crops being favourable, encourages a hope that provisions will not advance to that enormous price, which the present alarm seems to have suggested.

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### MONTHLY COMMERCIAL REPORT.

It may be proper to notice, as a subject closely connected with the Commercial interests of this country, the proposition made in the Imperial Parliament to permit the distillation from grain in Ireland, and to lay an additional duty on the importation of spirits from this country into Great Britain. In a former Commercial Report, this subject was noticed as connected with the proceedings in the last session of parliament, and a remark made that the business was taken up, rather as a question at issue between the landholders and the West Indian merchants, without reference to the most material point, whether in the state of seclusion in which the empire stands with regard to America and the North of Europe, grain will not be wanted in the shape of food. Every reason which applied in the course of last summer is equally cogent now, when the price of oats, the second article of prime necessity in Ireland, is at present so very high, and if the distillation be permitted to go on, is likely greatly to increase. But taxes are wanted, the revenue is found to be deficient, and the Chancellor of the Irish Exchequer is only solicitous to procure money for his friends to carry on the war-system. The inhabitants of Belfast have had two meetings on the subject, and have petitioned parliament against the measure of distillation. A full account of the meeting, as extracted from the Belfast news papers is given at page 149, to which we refer, and crave the attention of our readers. It affords satisfaction to see some revival of public spirit in the town of Belfast, and much credit is due to some of the speakers on the occasion.

It is sincerely wished, that the opposition to the measure may be successful, though there is little room to expect that the good of the people will weigh against the expected increase to the revenue. Private advantage generally outweighs the public good, and some are inclined to wish that the merchants of Belfast had kept above all suspicion of sinister views, by acting with public spirit in petitioning against the Orders in Council, which principally caused the alarms of scarcity, and seem likely to deprive the inhabitants of Ireland of the usual